



REPORT

EVALUATION OF THE STRENGTHENING THE RELIGIOUS ACTORS NETWORK
FOR PEACE PROJECT (2017-2018)



NORWEGIAN CHURCH AID



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Stephen Van Houten
Cape Town, August 2018

DISCLAIMER

The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of NCA.

ACRONYMS

ADA	Afghan Development Association
ANPDF	Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework
AWSDC	Afghan Women Skills Development Centre
CCA	Cooperation Centre for Afghanistan
CD	Country Director
CDC	Community Development Council
CHS	Common Humanitarian Standard
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CVE	Countering Violent Extremism
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
GoIRoA	Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
HAP	Humanitarian Accountability Partnership
HPC	High Peace Council
HO	Head Office
HQ	Head Quarters
INGO	International Non-governmental Organisation
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MFA	Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoE	Ministry of Economy
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
MoRA	Ministry of Religious Affairs and Hajj
MoWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs
MRAP	Mobilising Religious Actors for Peace (2013, 2014)
NAP 1325	National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 – Women, Peace and Security
NCA	Norwegian Church Aid
NDS	National Directorate of Security
NOK	Norwegian Krone
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NSC	Office of National Security Council (NSC),
NUCP	National Ulema Council for Peace
OECD/DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation & Development's Development Assistance Committee
PPC	Provincial Peace Council
RA	Religious Actor
RAP	Religious Actors for Peace
RPP	Reflecting on Peace Practice
SCCP	Social Council for Consolidation of Peace
SDO	Sanayee Development Organization
ToR	Term of Reference
UNSCR 1325	United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325
USD	US Dollar
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Evaluation Overview

Since 1979, Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) has worked in Afghanistan, in the areas of humanitarian emergency responses, economic empowerment, livelihood, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), peacebuilding, climate change mitigation, and women's empowerment. The project under evaluation, "Strengthening the Religious Actors' Network for Peace, 2017-2018" aims to mobilise religious actors (RAs) to facilitate, support and engage in inclusive peacebuilding actions with Armed Opposition Groups (AOGs)¹ and other conflicting parties to contribute to a sustainable reduction in violent conflict in Afghanistan. This project covers the last year, the 5th of 5 project phases.

The Social Council for Consolidation of Peace (SCCP), formerly known as the National Ulema Council for Peace (NUCP), is an independent network of 464 RAs working in all 34 provinces. NCA partnered with Sanayee Development Organization (SDO) in the management and implementation of the project. The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) funded the project.

Methodology

Based on the ToR and discussions with NCA, the following multi-faceted, mixed design methods were used, all of which are participatory, inclusive and target group sensitive. These included:



The Consultant conducted the evaluation over 18 days in July and August 2018. KIIs and FGDs were held in the Kabul and Mazar. Skype interviews were used, where required. The total number of respondents was 38, with 30 interviews (34 persons) and 1 FGD (4 persons). This total was made up of 6 women and 32 men. The complete list of people interviewed or consulted can be found in *Annex 5*. In order to maintain confidentiality and ensure the security of SCCP participants, their names were not included in the interview list. Instead, the total number of SCCP participants were included. On 19 July, the Validation Meeting was held in Kabul, at which the participants validated the preliminary findings.

This evaluation followed the international evaluation principles and standards of: objectivity, evaluator independence, the participation of all relevant stakeholders, transparency, focus, reliability, completeness and clarity of reports, and utility.²

¹ In this report, the term AOGs refers to individuals involved in armed opposition groups.

² Austrian Development Cooperation, Guidelines for Project and Programme Evaluations, July 2009, <http://www.oecd.org/development/evaluation/dcdndep/47069197.pdf>

Findings

This evaluation showed positive results for the project under review. A summary of the findings according to the five evaluation criteria is provided below.

NO.	CRITERIA	SCORE	FINDINGS
1	RELEVANCE	5/5	Stakeholders, at all levels, argued that the project was relevant and useful in response to international, national, regional and local needs and priorities. The project's uniqueness and significance were highlighted in terms of the direct mobilisation of RAs to raise peace awareness and bring AOGs to peace. The project objectives were valid, and the project responded to the needs of beneficiaries. Based on its history, current projects, and planned work, NCA is well placed to remain relevant and useful in Afghanistan. More specifically, NCA is uniquely placed to make a significant contribution to the ongoing peacebuilding initiatives in Afghanistan.
2	EFFECTIVENESS	5/5	This project was effective in that it achieved its objectives. This project's effectiveness was supported by its strong design and implementation. The major factors influencing the achievement of the objectives included the competent NCA project team, the partnership with SDO, NCA's added value and long-term experience and relationships in Afghanistan, commitment of and methods used by the majority of the SCCP members, inclusion and work of female RAs, influence of the RAs in communities, and linkages to government and other peace initiatives. Some of the barriers included security, varying skill and commitment levels of RAs, relationships with other stakeholders like the NDS and HPC, and the lack of resources.
3	EFFICIENCY	4/5	The project was implemented efficiently. This evaluation showed that the relationship between the project costs and results were reasonable and that the most efficient approaches were used during the implementation of the activities. The quality of the NCA-SDO partnership was good, and NCA's added value included the professional and supportive project team. No major issues were identified besides the remaining funds and the need to develop SCCP led and managed processes for future funding.
4	IMPACT	5/5	The project had an impact on the micro, meso and macro levels. Importantly, this project's impact is not only seen in the number of AOGs being brought to peace but in their related impact on national peace initiatives and areas like community access to education, health, bridges and roads. This project's impact is also noted in the exceeded targets and the associated impact on beneficiaries. There is evidence that the project had unintended positive and negative impacts on AOGs, RAs, gender, and communities.
5	SUSTAINABILITY	3/5	Despite the significant project gains made in the last year it would be difficult for the project, at this point, to be sustained beyond donor support. The project has established strong linkages with formal links with peace partners that are likely to support the continued implementation of the project. The time is right to pause and strategically reassess the key learnings as decisions are made about the future of the project.

These lessons learned highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the project preparation, design, and implementation that affected performance, outcome, and impact. This evaluation showed that:

- This project is unique and significant with regards to peacebuilding in Afghanistan.
- RAs are key contributors to the peacebuilding process because of their community presence, respect from communities, access and problem-solving roles.

- Peace efforts are stronger when men and women work together.
- Exposure trips led to significant attitudinal and behavioural changes in SCCP members.
- A strong M&E system allows for the tracking of activities even in challenging contexts.
- The strong, knowledgeable and committed NCA team contributed to the project's effectiveness and efficiency.
- Having national staff who are familiar with the context and are well connected makes project management easier.
- Working with a well-established partner assists with project implementation, management and success.
- This project resulted in many unintended positive impacts like the improvement of community access to education, health, bridges and roads.
- Despite the impressive gains achieved over the project phases, there is still work to be done to ensure that the SCCP can operate as an independent and self-sufficient body.
- NCA is uniquely placed to make a significant contribution to the ongoing peacebuilding initiatives in Afghanistan.

Recommendations

NO.	AREA	RECOMMENDATION
1	Support	Continue with technical and financial support towards the development of the SCCP for the next 3-5 years
2	Strategic Planning	Conduct a strategic planning session in the next month or two with all relevant stakeholders to discuss the project's future goals and to create an independent and functioning organisation
3	Participatory Methodology	Strengthen the participatory methodology to engage beneficiaries as this project moves forward
4	Physical Presence	Establish more regional and provincial offices in order to create a stronger physical presence
5	Training	Develop a training plan to capacitate key SCCP members with the required organisational skills (e.g. management, proposal writing, and M&E)
6	Train the Trainer Model	Develop a train the trainer model so that SCCP minimises its reliance on external partners for capacity building
7	Funding	Employ or second a part-time proposal writer to write proposals and train 2-3 SCCP members
8	Statute	Use the completed SCCP Statute to show donors to illustrate SCCP's work



9	Remote Areas	Develop an implementation plan that targets remote areas that RAs have not been able to engage up to this point.
10	Gender	Continue strengthening women's SCCP membership and leadership roles
11	Youth	Develop a plan to engage and utilise youth in the network
12	Exposure Trips	Continue exposure trips to countries that have experience in peacebuilding, with clear selection criteria and participant commitments to the SCCP after the trip
13	Targets	Set targets based on actual results from Phase 5
14	Security	Conduct a security review and update the security plan to ensure the highest level of security for RAs involved in the project

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

As per the ToR, the purpose of the final evaluation is to:

- Identify successes (things that are working well), challenges and outline the corrective actions taken to address any issues, so as to ensure the continuance of the programme “Strengthening the Religious Actors’ Network for Peace, 2017-2018.”

Specific Objectives

In particular, this evaluation should:

- Provide an independent assessment of the progress and performance of the programme to date against expected outcomes and comment on what has worked and why and what has not worked and why.
- Analyse the way in which the programme is contributing to securing and linking sustainable peace in the targeted areas.
- Outline how NCA is fulfilling the CHS "Standards and Commitments" (including accountability), as spelled out in NCA's Accountability Framework.
- Provide lessons learned in order to give an assessment of the performance thus far and to indicate what has worked and how.

Past Evaluations

Project evaluations were conducted in 2013, 2014 and 2015. A common finding from these evaluations is that the project resulted in positive changes for participants. For example, their capacity, skills and motivation were strengthened, and there were changes in their perceptions, attitudes and behaviours. The 2015 evaluation findings and responses are discussed later in the report.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Mandate

The evaluation is a mandatory requirement for all NCA projects (as defined in the policy guidance) and in accordance with Common Humanitarian Standard (CHS), of which NCA is a certified member.

Background

NCA

In 1947, NCA began as a small fundraising drive by Norwegian churches.³ NCA is an independent humanitarian and ecumenical organisation for global justice. As a church and a faith-based organisation, NCA is part of civil society both in Norway and internationally. With its headquarters in Oslo, Norway, NCA operates in 32 countries to eradicate poverty and injustice. NCA responds to emergencies as well as working for long-term development in communities.

NCA's vision is "together for a just world," and its mission is "working for global justice."⁴ Based on these, NCA commits to the following Principles:

- A commitment to rights
- Women's rights and gender equity
- Protection of the environment
- Peace and reconciliation
- Accountability.⁵

Accountability sits at the core of NCA's values and principles.⁶ NCA's Accountability Framework outlines their commitments to rights-holders, host communities, partners and other stakeholders. NCA's standards for accountability cover: (1) international and global standards (e.g. Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) standards for accountability and quality management), (2) NCA - specific standards (e.g. NCA security policy and standard), and (3) mandatory standards and commitments related to ACT Alliance affiliation (e.g. membership agreement and code of good practice).

NCA is a member of the ACT Alliance, one of the world's largest humanitarian alliances. It is also a member of the Common Humanitarian Standard (CHS) Alliance (formerly HAP). In November 2011, NCA was certified as compliant with the HAP Standard in Humanitarian Accountability and Quality Management. NCA is committed to the CHS's nine commitments for humanitarian and development

³ NCA, Our History, <https://www.kirkensnodhjelp.no/en/about-nca/our-history/>

⁴ NCA, Together for a just world: Norwegian Church Aid's Statement of Principles, 30 May 2008, https://www.kirkensnodhjelp.no/globalassets/strategiske-dokumenter-og-foringer/kn_prinsipdok_en_2011.pdf

⁵ NCA, Norwegian Church Aid's Accountability Framework, <https://www.kirkensnodhjelp.no/contentassets/603b767f08b8484084f00467f07a507f/nca-accountability-framework1.pdf>

⁶ NCA, Accountability, <https://www.kirkensnodhjelp.no/en/about-nca/accountability/>

actors to measure and improve the quality and effectiveness of their assistance.

NCA in Afghanistan

Since 1979, NCA has worked in Afghanistan, which has resulted in strong relationships with national civil society organisations, government agencies, and national and local institutions.⁷ NCA Afghanistan highlights conflict mitigation as part of all development activities. NCA Afghanistan aims to end armed conflict and promote sustainable changes by ensuring equal rights and the reconfiguration of social, economic, and political dynamics. NCA’s country focus is on economic empowerment, WASH and peacebuilding.

NCA has been involved in various peacebuilding programmes in Afghanistan with the goal of increasing levels of peace for communities.⁸ These peacebuilding interventions include “Mobilising Religious Actors for Peace” (British Embassy in Kabul) and “Building Resilience Communities for Development and Peace” (Norad). Partners included the Afghan Development Association (ADA), Afghan Women Skills Development Centre (AWSDC), Cooperation Centre for Afghanistan (CCA), and Sanayee Development Organization (SDO).

Two central components of these programmes have been the promotion of inclusive peacebuilding structures within communities and women’s participation in peace processes. Peace *Shuras* were established with the participation of community members and religious leaders (including women and youth). Members of the Peace *Shuras* received conflict resolution training, mentoring and capacity building. NCA built on local traditions and established community peace *Shuras* in communities where no such institution existed and strengthened the capacities of existing institutions like the Community Development Councils (CDCs). An important component of the peacebuilding programme was the inclusion of women in CDCs and peace councils and the facilitation and coordination between the community and district level CDCs and peace councils. NCA also identified the key religious leaders with access to both communities and government bodies. The project under evaluation is described in the next section.

Project Portfolio in Overview

Overview

<p>Description</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The main target group of the programme was 464 religious actors who are working under the umbrella of the National Ulema Council for Peace (NUCP) network. • The programme covered 34 provinces and members from different ethnic groups across Afghanistan. • There are 108 women in the NUCP network which constitutes 23.27% of the total beneficiaries. • The programme is designed for a period of 12 months. • The overall goal of the project is <i>Religious actors facilitate, support and engage in inclusive peacebuilding actions with Armed Opposition Groups and other conflicting parties, contributing to a sustainable reduction in violent conflict.</i> • The support from MFA will enable 50 NUCP members (at least 20% women) to increase their technical skills in peace facilitation, who will in turn transfer this
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⁷ NCA, Afghanistan, <https://www.kirkensnodhjelp.no/en/where-we-work/afghanistan/>

⁸ NCA, Building Peace in Communities in Afghanistan, 2015



	<p>knowledge to other network members.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All in all, the support from MFA will strengthen religious actors in local peace processes with armed opposition groups and strengthen their leadership and management capacity to promote relationships between religious actors.
Partners	Sanayee Development Organization (SDO)
Donor grant scheme	Peace and Reconciliation – Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)
NCA program area	Peacebuilding
Application amount	NOK 2,750,000 (USD 320,306.46) (+ 7% Head Office (HO) Administrative Cost)

Project Logic and Assumptions

Before its registration in 2017, the Social Council for Consolidation of Peace (SCCP) was known as the National Ulema Council for Peace (NUCP), which stemmed from the Religious Actors for Peace (RAP) programme (2013). The SCCP consists of a network of religious actors (RAs) who work for peace and stability in Afghanistan. These RAs consist of religious leaders, scholars, lecturers and teachers, whom NCA recognizes as sources of influence in combatting radicalism and violence.

The project has consisted of five phases, with this evaluation assessing the 5th phase (June 2017 – May 2018). The key assumption underpinning the SCCP’s work is that there has been a perceptible lack of engagement of RAs in formal and informal peace processes in Afghanistan, which is a major deficit in trying to achieve a lasting truce in the country. Researchers have noted that there has been surprisingly little attention paid to the role of RAs in combating extremist violence internationally.⁹ The present Afghan government has emphasized the importance of RAs’ participation in peacebuilding. The SCCP 5th phase aimed to provide technical support to a motivated group within the network in order to enable and mobilize them to contribute to a reduction in violent conflict and extremism by engaging key stakeholders. The project outcomes were the: (1) strengthened engagement of religious actors in localized peace processes with armed opposition groups, and (2) NUCP is able to establish formal linkages with formal and informal peace institutions.

The 464 SCCP members cover all 34 provinces. The SCCP is organized into seven regional hubs: Herat, Kabul, Kandahar, Kunduz, Mazar, Nangarhar, and Paktia. There are regional committees with two elected representatives from each of the seven regions (four for Kabul) and two nominated by the facilitating partners serving on the SCCP Leadership Panel (Board of Governance – Core Group). The Leadership Panel is responsible for the SCCP’s mandate and its continued development. There are 108 (23.3%) women in the SCCP, many of whom are involved in key roles in journalism and education, including schools, universities and Madrassas. In terms of leadership, one woman is the Deputy Chairperson of the central Leadership Panel, one woman is leading the SCCP regional committee in Balkh (Mazar-e-Sharif) and the another one is head of the provincial council in Maidan Wardak.

The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) funded the 5th phase of the project. The budget was NOK 2,750,000 (USD 320,306.46) + 7% HO administrative costs. NCA partnered with SDO for this project. NCA HO in Oslo also provided additional technical support and expertise, where required.

Established in 1990, SDO is an Afghan NGO founded to support peace building efforts for Afghan

⁹ Anna Halafoff & David Wright-Neville, A Missing Peace? The Role of Religious Actors in Countering Terrorism, Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, Volume 32, Issue 1, pp. 931-932, 2009, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100903262740>

refugees in Peshawar.¹⁰ SDO focuses on the development of a peaceful, developed and self-sustaining society through education, training and other forms of capacity building of individuals, civil society groups and government staff in the sectors of peacebuilding, community development, education, and community health.¹¹ Relevant to this project, SDO has the reputation as, “one of the leading peace and development agencies in Afghanistan.”¹²

In the delivery of the project, NCA and SDO coordinated with relevant stakeholders. At a national level, NCA and SDO communicated and cooperated with relevant government departments and commissions, including the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Hajj (MoRA), Ministry of Women Affairs (MoWA), High Peace Council (HPC), Provincial Peace Council (PPC), National Directorate of Security (NDS), Community Development Councils (CDCs), community-based peace institutions and Madrassas.

The project goal, outcomes and outputs were:

OVERALL GOAL		
Religious actors to facilitate, support and engage in inclusive peacebuilding actions with armed opposition groups and other conflicting parties, contributing to a sustainable reduction in violent conflict		
OUTCOMES		
1	2	3
Strengthened engagement of religious actors in localised peace processes with armed opposition groups	The NUCP is able to establish formal linkages with formal and informal peace institutions	NUCP is a functioning organisation to deliver strategic peace initiatives
OUTPUTS		
Increased technical skills of selected religious actors to engage in peace processes with armed opposition groups	Regular interaction in place between NUCP members and formal provincial and national level structures (HPC, PPCs, Ulema Council)	NUCP is formally registered as an NGO with the Ministry of Economy
Religious actors (dialogue experts) increase linkages with key stakeholders	NUCP members serve as resources to peace at provincial and district levels through written MoUs (HPC, PPC, District level peace <i>Shura</i>)	Increase the capacity of regional committee members in supervision and monitoring
Religious actors increase face-to-face meetings members of armed opposition groups		

The complete log frame can be found in *Annex 6*.

¹⁰ Start Some Good, Sanayee Development Organization (SDO), <https://startsomegood.com/sanayee>

¹¹ Reliefweb, Sanayee Development Organization (SDO), <https://reliefweb.int/organization/sdo>

¹² Peace Insight, Sanayee Development Organization (SDO), <https://www.peaceinsight.org/conflicts/afghanistan/peacebuilding-organisations/sd/>



In 2015, NCA commissioned a previous evaluation on the Religious Actors for Peace (RAP) in Afghanistan. The aim of this evaluation was to “assess the relevance, impact and effectiveness of the RAP project and to draw lessons learned and strategic recommendations for further involvement of religious actors.”¹³ The recommendations were to guide the future programmes involving religious actors. RAP was a continuation of the two earlier phases of the project “Mobilizing Religious Actors for Peace” (MRAP).

The recommendations were:

- **Continuation, consolidation, and commitment:** Planned activities in the 3rd phase are in preparation for the next phase, which is to follow up with the participants and ensure the momentum is not lost. After mobilising more than 400 participants, the first priority should be to consolidate and ensure structures for them to be motivated to continue the work. A leadership structure is already in place and regular meetings should be held to share lessons learned and for further training. Not to lose momentum, the first meeting should be called as soon as possible once funding for the next phase is in place. Peacebuilding is a long-term process. Short-term project intervals should be replaced by longer term commitment, i.e. 3 – 5 years.
- **Continue the process of institutionalising ownership:** With the new structure for RAP in place, there is a foundation for institutionalising ownership of the religious leaders. Capitalizing on the existing trust with the participants, the next phase can help increase and eventually institutionalise ownership.
- **Strategic assessments:** For RAP actions to be strategic, they should be coordinated and delivered through close follow up to have a broader impact. RAP network and its newly elected board should have formal partnerships with relevant governmental ministries and institutions.
- **Gender:** The number of female participants should be increased in the programme on all levels. More female trainers will motivate greater female participation.
- **Reaching out to remote areas:** RAP-participants from the districts are concerned about the need to share their experiences and insights with people who live in remote areas. This is an opportunity for participants to transform their communities and constituencies. Therefore, efforts should be made to reach out further to more communities by training mullahs from far away districts.
- **Include Conflict Sensitivity:** To avoid unintentional and unwanted effects of the program there should be a plan to include assessments for conflict sensitivity.
- **Non-Violence and Islam:** Explore possibilities for cooperation with other peace initiatives for training and research.

Responses to these recommendations are discussed below under *Findings: Effectiveness*.

¹³ Norunn Grande, Evaluation of Religious Actors for Peace (RAP), May 2016, <https://www.norad.no/en/toolspublications/publications/ngo-evaluations/2016/religious-actors-for-peace-rap-in-afghanistan/>

METHODOLOGY

Evaluation Approach

NCA proposed using the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria.¹⁴

1	RELEVANCE	The extent to which the objectives of a development intervention are consistent with beneficiaries' requirement, country needs, global priorities and partners' and donors' policies.
2	EFFECTIVENESS	The measure of the extent to which an intervention meets its objectives. Objectives are defined quantitatively as expected outputs or results.
3	EFFICIENCY	A measure of how economically resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted to results.
4	IMPACT	The positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.
5	SUSTAINABILITY	The continuation of benefits from a development intervention after major development assistance has been completed. The probability of long-term benefits. The resilience to the risk of the net benefit flows over time.

Each criterion was broken down into specific questions (*Annex 2*), and, taken together, these criteria provide management with the critical information needed to understand the programme and determine what should be done next. A *rating of the performance* of the project was used to show comparisons. These ratings are based on the findings of the desk review, interviews, and focus group discussion. The intervention is assessed against the OECD-DAC criteria using the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5
Low or no visible contribution to this aspect	Some evidence of contribution to this aspect but significant improvement required	Evidence of satisfactory contribution to this aspect but improvement required	Evidence of good contribution to this aspect with some areas for improvement and change remaining	Evidence that the contribution is strong and/or exceeding that which was expected of the intervention

¹⁴ OECD, DAC Criteria for Evaluating Development Assistance, <http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

Methods

Based on the ToR and discussions with NCA, the following multi-faceted, mixed design methods were used, all of which are participatory, inclusive and target group sensitive. The methodology, tools and scheduling are gender and target group sensitive. These included:

DESK REVIEW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project documents and concept notes • Progress and monitoring reports, including financial reports • Evaluation reports • Donor documentation • Strategic plans and work programmes • Publications • Any other relevant documentation (such as news stories, press releases, publications, videos, photos and success stories).
KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS & FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core Project Staff (FGD & KIIs) • Government (KIIs) • Religious Actors (KIIs) • Donors (KIIs) • Partners (KIIs).
VALIDATION MEETINGS	At the end of the data collection phase, a Validation Meeting was held with key staff and stakeholders to present and validate the findings.

In the KIIs and FGDs, descriptive, normative, and impact questions were used to ensure that past, present, and future conditions were described, and cause-and-effect relationships explored (Annex 2). The quality of evidence was addressed through the following evidence criteria:

- Beneficiary Voice and Inclusion (especially the most excluded and marginalized groups)
- Appropriateness
- Triangulation
- Contribution
- Transparency.¹⁵

In terms of the data collection and analysis, international non-governmental organisation (INGO) and United Nations (UN) evaluation guidelines were used to assure quality and mitigate risk.¹⁶ The data was described, analysed, and interpreted through the following methods: data triangulation; testing reliability and validity; assessing the sufficiency of data; assessing contradictions; and comparing with comparative standards (of other similar projects and initiatives).

An *Evaluation Matrix* was used as a framework for sorting the data. Findings were generated through data patterning, coding, and weighting. The report format followed the outline suggested by NCA.

Following the ToR and the desk review, this evaluation uses *purposive sampling* to best answer the evaluation questions by focussing on the relevant population involved in the project. More specifically, the type of purposive sampling used is *maximum variation sampling*, which allows the evaluator to

¹⁵ BOND, Evidence Principles, <https://www.bond.org.uk/resources/evidence-principles>

¹⁶ United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), Norms and Standards for Evaluation, June 2016, <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914>

gain greater insights into a project by looking at it from all angles. The evaluator is thus able to identify common themes that are evident across the sample.

In qualitative designs, the focus generally is not on sample size but rather on sample adequacy.¹⁷ The adequacy of sampling is used as an indication of quality which is justified by reaching *saturation*.¹⁸ This evaluation will use thematic data saturation, which means that there are no more patterns or themes emerging from the data.¹⁹

Regarding the limitations of purposive sampling, these are usually cited as: errors in evaluator judgment; low level of reliability; and inability to generalize findings. The evaluation quality criteria listed in the previous section will be used to minimise these limitations. While the evaluated sample is not representative of the whole population, this is not considered to be a weakness in evaluations where qualitative or mixed methods research designs are used.²⁰ Given that there are only a limited number of primary data sources in this evaluation, purposive sampling is the most appropriate sampling method available.²¹ This method choice is also strengthened by its high rating on cost- and time-effectiveness.

Summary of Problems and Issues Encountered

The ongoing security risks in Afghanistan pose certain limitations, most notably in the ability to collect data in areas of poor security. Another limitation is language, which was addressed using a translator.

Certain beneficiaries were not able to participate in the evaluation because of the security risks. These beneficiaries included AOGs, families of AOGs, and related communities.

¹⁷ <http://salmapatel.co.uk/academia/saturation-in-qualitative-research-samples>

¹⁸ Bowen, G. a., 2008. Naturalistic inquiry and the saturation concept: a research note. *Qualitative Research*, 8(1), 137–152.

¹⁹ O'Reilly, M. and Parker, N., 2012. 'Unsatisfactory Saturation': a critical exploration of the notion of saturated sample sizes in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, [online] 13(2), pp.190–197. Available at: <<http://qrj.sagepub.com/cgi/doi/10.1177/1468794112446106>>

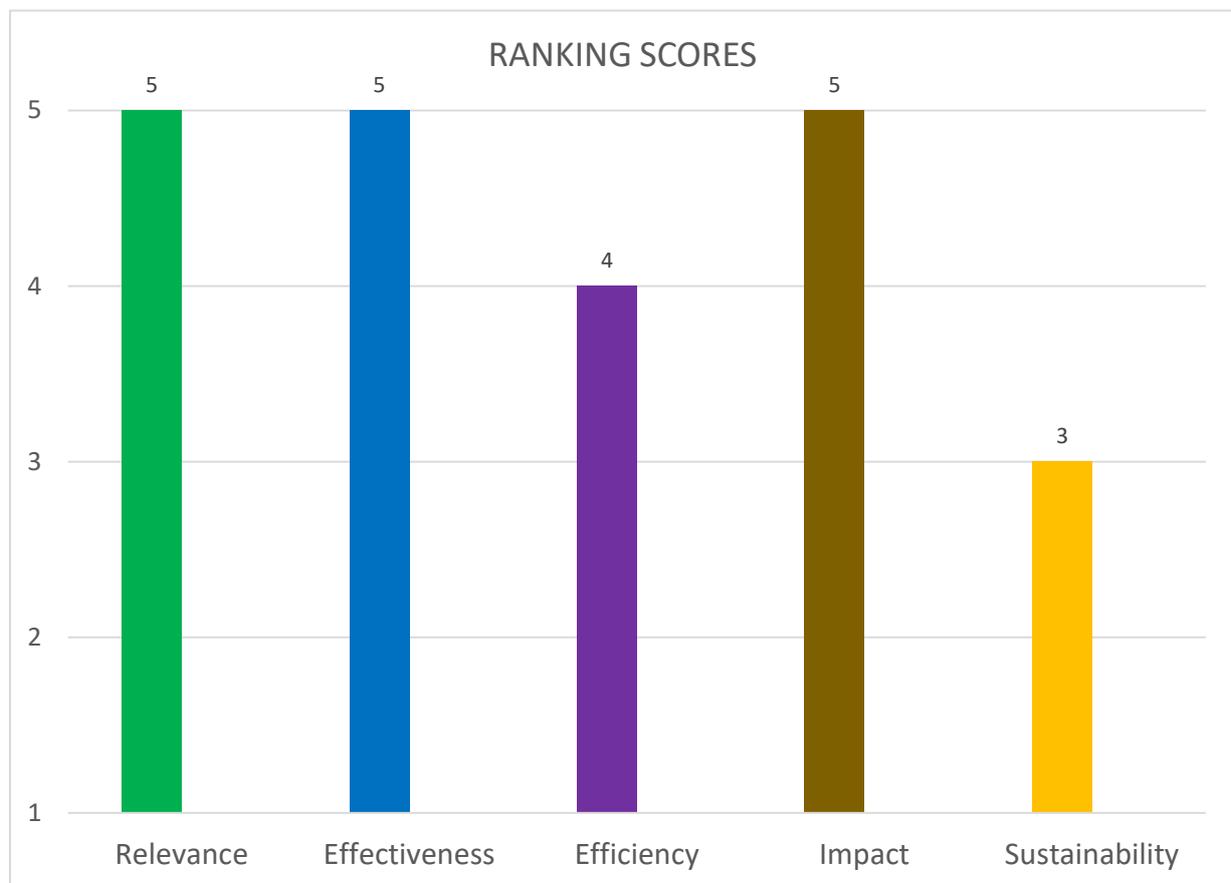
²⁰ <http://researchbasics.education.uconn.edu/>

²¹ <http://research-methodology.net/sampling-in-primary-data-collection/purposive-sampling/>

FINDINGS

Achievements

The findings are now presented according to the five evaluation criteria of: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. The findings are fact-based, and each criterion begins with the performance ranking score followed by the extent to which the results have been achieved, partly achieved, or not achieved. The overall ranking scores are outlined below.



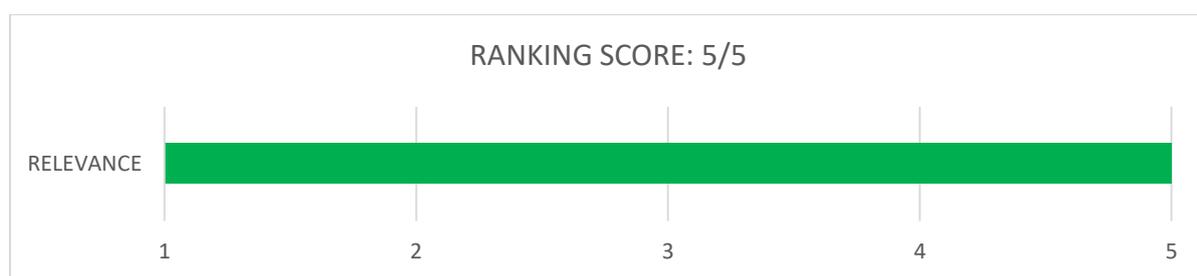
KEY

1	2	3	4	5
Low or no visible contribution to this aspect	Some evidence of contribution to this aspect but significant improvement required	Evidence of satisfactory contribution to this aspect but improvement required	Evidence of good contribution to this aspect with some areas for improvement and change	Evidence that the contribution is strong and/or exceeding that which was expected of the programme

Assessment

Overall, there was positive project achievement across the five evaluation criteria and associated specific questions. Relevance, Effectiveness and Impact all scored very high, followed by Efficiency and then Sustainability. Each area is now discussed in more detail. This evaluation found that the project had a strong integration of cross-cutting issues. That is, the project had well-articulated gender and human rights, and, to a lesser degree, youth components. There are opportunities to strengthen youth components.

Relevance



CRITERIA	SCORE
The broadened scope of Phase 5 of the programme is relevant to the context and needs of the SCCP	
The stated goal and objectives are relevant to the issues of Strengthening the Religious Actors Network for Peace and aligned with the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF, 2017-2021)	
ACHIEVED PARTIALLY ACHIEVED NOT ACHIEVED	

Relevance is a measure of the extent to which interventions meet recipient needs, country priorities, and are consistent with donor policies. This evaluation found that the project was relevant to the needs and expectations of target groups, NCA's strategy, national strategies and policies, and international humanitarian and development guidelines.

This project addressed the overall goal for “religious actors to facilitate, support and engage in inclusive peacebuilding actions with Armed Opposition Groups and other conflicting parties, contributing to a sustainable reduction in violent conflict.” This was done through: (1) strengthening the engagement of religious actors in localised peace processes with AOGs, (2) assisting the NUCP to establish formal linkages with formal and informal peace institutions, and (3) ensuring that the NUCP is a functioning organisation to deliver strategic peace initiatives. Respondents highlighted the project’s successful response to beneficiaries, who in this case are all Afghans, which is being done through the work done by RAs with AOGs. One respondent stated, “this project’s scope is massive – it has started to and can touch all of Afghanistan.” Another respondent noted, “AOGs are relatively isolated and there are no programmes to address their specific needs, especially to help them leave violence and join peace.”

A common theme of the interviews was the relevance and significance of RA’s involvement in peacebuilding. There are several factors that contribute to this. Respondents highlighted the



historically important roles that RAs play in communities, which include leadership and problem-solving roles. Following this is RAs unique presence in and access to communities. A respondent said, “religious leaders are in the middle of government and communities, and they are seen as impartial. This gives them a lot of power to highlight and respond to issues in ways that no-one else can.” This potential influence was emphasized by respondents who underlined RA’s ability to influence individuals and communities through preaching, teaching and the issuance of *Fatwas*. Some respondents, including RAs, noted that while this influence can be positive, it has and continues to be negative in certain contexts.

This project is aligned with NCA’s vision of “together for a just world,” and mission of “working for global justice.” The project responds to NCA’s global strategy that defines the importance and role of religion in bringing peace. The project also adheres to NCA’s country strategy that focuses on the importance of engaging key influential people, like RAs, and youth in peacebuilding initiatives. The project is aligned with NCA’s policy on Peace, Security and Stability.

The project is clearly aligned with the policies of Afghanistan. In the Preamble of the Constitution of Afghanistan, the country’s Islamic foundation and commitment to peace are evident in: “We the people of Afghanistan: Believing staunchly in Almighty God, relying on His Bountiful mercy and adhering to the Holy religion of Islam ... And in order to: Foster national unity, safeguard independence, national sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country.”²² The Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF) is the government’s five-year strategic framework for achieving its overarching goal of self-reliance.²³ The ANPDF outlines its commitment to peace in the Introduction: “Afghanistan’s economic and development forecast is informed by the prospects for achieving peace and reconciliation. The government is deeply invested in the peace process and stands firm on the need to find political solutions to the conflict.”²⁴

The implementation of the ANPDF and its emphasis on sustainable peace is articulated in the Citizen’s Charter National Priority Programme, where it is stated: “The Citizens’ Charter is a promise of partnership. Equally as important as the services it provides is the process that it follows. A government that is transparent, democratic, responsive, and respectful of local knowledge will restore people’s faith in the benefits of peace and the possibility of justice.”²⁵ The Government’s pledge to peace is evident in President Ghani’s repeated insistence on getting RAs engaged in peacebuilding initiatives. On 14 July 2018, President Ghani, at the NATO Summit, stated, “we are extending our global and regional partnership to the arenas of peace, investment, trade, and transit. Acting on the national consensus on peace, we have demonstrated the political will to offer unconditional peace talks and declare a unilateral ceasefire, which the Taliban accepted for the three-day Eid holiday.”²⁶

This project is also aligned with Afghanistan’s National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 – Women, Peace

²² GoIRoA, The Constitution of Afghanistan, 26 January 2004, pp.3-4, <http://www.afghanembassy.com.pl/afg/images/pliki/TheConstitution.pdf>

²³ GoIRoA, Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF), 2017-2021, <http://policymof.gov.af/afghanistan-national-peace-and-development-framework-anpdf/>

²⁴ GoIRoA, Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF), 2017-2021, p.2, <http://policymof.gov.af/afghanistan-national-peace-and-development-framework-anpdf/>

²⁵ GoIRoA, Citizens’ Charter National Priority Programme, December 2016, <http://policymof.gov.af/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Citizens%E2%80%99-Charter-Program.pdf>

²⁶ The Kabul Times, Time is ripe for peace making in Afghanistan, President Ghani tells NATO summit, 14 July 2018, http://www.thekabultimes.gov.af/2018/07/14/time-is-ripe-for-peace-making-in-afghanistan-president-ghani-tells-nato-summit/?utm_source=SocialAutoPoster&utm_medium=Social&utm_campaign=Facebook



and Security (NAP 1325), developed in June 2015 under the leadership of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. NAP 1325 acknowledged that in a post-conflict country men and women, with equal access to opportunities and resources, play a vital role in the country's development. NAP 1325 followed Afghanistan's commitments to United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) on 31 October 2000.²⁷ In UNSCR 1325, the Security Council asked those active in peace negotiation and implementation to "adopt a gender perspective that included the special needs of women and girls during repatriation and resettlement, rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction."²⁸ The Security Council thereby recognized the impact of war on women and their central role in conflict management, conflict resolution, and maintaining peace. Participation, defined as the inclusion of women and girls' interests in decision making processes related to the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts, is one the four pillars of UNSCR 1325, along with prevention, protection, and relief and recovery.

At the international level, this project is aligned with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16, the goal of which is to: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.²⁹ This project was aligned with CHS Commitment 1: Communities and people affected by a crisis receive assistance appropriate and relevant to their needs, and the related Quality Criterion: Humanitarian response is appropriate and relevant.

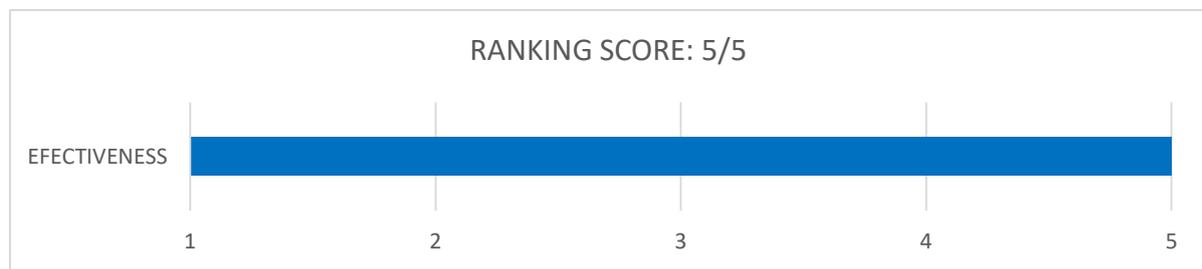
In summary, stakeholders, at all levels, argued that the project was relevant and useful in response to international, national, regional and local needs and priorities. The project's uniqueness and significance were highlighted in terms of the direct mobilisation of RAs to raise peace awareness and bring AOGs to peace. The project objectives were valid, and the project responded to the needs of beneficiaries. Based on its history, current projects, and planned work, NCA is well placed to remain relevant and useful in Afghanistan. More specifically, NCA is uniquely placed to make a significant contribution to the ongoing peacebuilding initiatives in Afghanistan.

²⁷ UN, Security Council, 31 October 2000, Resolution 1325, [http://undocs.org/S/RES/1325\(2000\)](http://undocs.org/S/RES/1325(2000))

²⁸ UN, Security Council, 31 October 2000, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 1325 (2000), Calls for Broad Participation of Women in Peace-building, post-conflict Reconstruction, <http://www.un.org/press/en/2000/20001031.sc6942.doc.html>

²⁹ UN, Sustainable Development Goals, SDG 16, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg16>

Effectiveness



CRITERIA	SCORE
What part of the programme has been the most effective and had a positive role through the established SCCP network?	
What has been the contribution of the programme across other sectors?	

ACHIEVED |
 PARTIALLY ACHIEVED |
 NOT ACHIEVED

Effectiveness is a measure of the extent to which an intervention meets its objectives. Objectives are defined quantitatively as expected outputs or results. Effectiveness is evaluated by comparing what has been obtained with what was planned, and thus outputs and results indicators are all that is required. A project’s effectiveness is assessed by asking: To what extent were the objectives achieved or are likely to be achieved? What were the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives?

In examining whether the project made sufficient progress towards its expected outcomes and to what extent (e.g. fully achieved, partially achieved, or not achieved), the achievements were independently verified through the desk review, a review of the M&E data, and qualitative data from the KIIs and FGDs. The three results (outcomes) were achieved. The table on the next page provides details of the outcomes and outputs, with the associated indicators, targets and results.



NO.	OUTCOMES & OUTPUTS	INDICATORS	BASELINE	TARGET	ACTUAL	PROGRESS
OUTCOME						
1	Strengthened engagement of religious actors in localised peace processes with armed opposition groups	No. of Religious Leader and AOG member dialogue meetings	33	39	266	682%
		No. of Peace Dialogues initiated between AOGs and Afghan Government	6	7	20	286%
OUTPUTS						
1.1.	Increased technical skills of selected religious actors to engage in peace processes with armed opposition groups	No. of religious actors trained in dialogue facilitation methods, negotiations, trust building, and drafting of peace agreements who demonstrate increase in knowledge and skills	0%	50	113	226%
1.2.	Religious actors (dialogue experts) increase linkages with key stakeholders	No. of religious actors' meetings organised with formal stakeholders	12	50	53	106%
1.3.	Religious actors increase face-to-face meetings with members of armed opposition groups	No. of action plans for peace processes developed	33	39	107	274%
		No. of dialogue meetings organised with AOGs	33	39	266	682%
OUTCOME						
2	The NUCP is able to establish formal linkages with formal and informal peace institutions	No. of MoUs signed with formal and informal peace institutions	0	40	73	183%
OUTPUTS						
2.1.	Regular interaction in place between NUCP members and formal provincial and national level structures (HPC, PPCs, Ulema Council)	No. of meetings per quarter between NUCP, Ulema Council members, HPC and PPCs members	0	40	102	255%
2.2.	NUCP members serve as resources to peace at provincial and district levels through written MoUs (HPC, PPC, District level peace Shura)	No. of local level institutions acknowledge the positive supporting role of NUCP members.	0	50	-	Results not yet available
		No. of MoUs signed with provincial and district level peace institutions	0	40	73	183%
OUTCOME						
3	NUCP is a functioning organisation to deliver strategic peace initiatives	% of NUCP members satisfied with how NUCP internal structures (i.e. leadership panel, policies and procedures) are working, disaggregated by gender, age & religious sect	84.5%	85%	-	Results not yet available
OUTPUTS						
3.1.	NUCP is formally registered as an NGO with the Ministry of Economy	NUCP receives its registration certificate from MoE	0	Register	Registered: Ministry of Justice (MoJ) ³⁰	100%
3.2.	Increase the capacity of regional committee members in supervision and monitoring	% of regional committee members with adequate knowledge of supervision and monitoring	0	75% ³¹	78%	104%

³⁰ In Afghanistan, NGOs are registered with the MoE; CSOs and political parties with the MoJ.

³¹ This indicator's baseline was originally set at 0%. During training the pre-tests results were measured at 35% and the post-test at 78%.



These results show that almost all of the outcomes and outputs were achieved (excluding the data of one outcome and one output). These two exceptions are from data that was not available at the time of the evaluation and are expected in late-August 2018. The progress across the log frame shows significant progress over the targets. Higher achievements do not necessarily indicate a successful project because there might be negative contributing factors. These factors may include: inadequate planning; deliberately setting a low target to ensure the achievement of perceived good results; poor monitoring systems; and the double counting of beneficiaries. This evaluation showed that these factors are not relevant to this project, and that the overachievement of results was due primarily to having low expectations, compared with the actual RA interest, commitment and engagement. As one project team stated, “we did not expect such a positive response from religious actors. Our targets were too low.” This point is illustrated, for example, in the number of dialogue meetings that RAs organised with AOGs (Output 1.3.). The target of 39 was exceeded by results of 266, a progress of 682%. Another contributing factor is that this project is relatively unique with almost no comparative data. It is clear from the interviews and focus group discussion that the project team is aware of these two contributing factors and are able to address the setting of more realistic targets moving forward, as required.

An intervention’s effectiveness is determined principally by two processes: its design and its implementation. The review of the relevant documents, M&E data, performance reports and the interview data showed that the design and implementation were strong. In assessing the factors influencing the achievement of the objectives, this discussion will begin with the main project drivers. These drivers are organised into NCA, SCCP, and partnership contributions.

NCA

This evaluation showed that the project was well designed and planned. As noted in the section above, this project is relevant to the current social, economic and political context in Afghanistan, with the current peace initiatives and activities. This national relevance is vital to the project’s effectiveness in that it contributes to participation, commitment, increased activities, and improved outcomes. Moreover, this project is unique and rare in the context of Afghanistan as it directly involves RAs in the implementation of the project and yet the AOGs and the related communities are not aware of the links between the RAs and NCA, SDO and the government. There is no other way that this project can be implemented because of the security risks, but it should be noted that the NCA country project team and management have handled this extremely sensitive issue professionally and proficiently.

The log frame was clearly articulated and formed the basis for the consistent and ongoing monitoring. The M&E system is solid and well managed. The project team was aware of the monitoring data and they used the data to inform and shift implementation decisions. For example, unspent budget lines taken from the monitoring reports were used to increase the number of RAs trained, thus increasing provincial coverage and the number of MoUs signed. The target for the number of MoUs signed with provincial and district level peace institutions (Output 2.2.) was set at 40, yet 73 MoUs were signed (183% progress). The evaluation showed M&E data that was relevant, accessible and utilised. The M&E system is also aligned with HQ.

In the observations and interviews, it was noted that the NCA staff was skilled, flexible and supportive. More will be discussed about the team under the next section, *Efficiency*. They are also accomplished at developing partners and RAs. Respondents commonly noted NCA’s flexibility in having to deal with what were often complex issues with, at times, vital security outcomes. An RA said, “we want to thank NCA staff for their flexibility. They were always willing to listen to us and change the plan according to what we told them and what we needed.” In this project, NCA staff took a conscious background role,

allowing the partner SDO and the RAs to take the lead in the planning and activities. This was also done for reasons of security, in that it is important in this project that AOGs, communities and the government see RAs as impartial. NCA staff managed this role well, especially as INGOs are often required to be more active and visible in projects. NCA's senior management team also clearly supports the project.

SCCP

As of July 2018, the SSCP is made up of 464 members, many of whom are contributing to the project's effectiveness. The network's make-up is diverse in that it is comprised of maulavi, mullahs, university professors, school teachers and religious teachers in madrasas, collectively referred to as RAs in this project. This composition shows the network's extensive coverage and influence across communities in the country. Respondents commonly noted that the fact that RAs were being used is the project's unique added value. In other words, as noted above under *Relevance*, RAs have enormous community influence and respect, including AOGs, as a result of their traditional leadership and problem-solving roles in communities.

Another central component of the network's make-up is the inclusion of women (108 out of 464 – 23.3%). In Afghanistan, religious leadership is traditionally regarded as the realm of men. One of the principal contributions of this project was to define RAs as consisting of both men and women. Not only did this challenge the national status quo but it also redefined the actors of the peace process in Afghanistan. This project highlights the vital roles that both men and women have in the national peacebuilding process. A respondent said, "we are in this together and the reason we are successful is because women are now part of peace activities." The enormous impact of women's inclusion in the network cannot be overstated, as evidenced in numerous examples provided during the evaluation. A male respondent noted, "I have learned a lot from the women in the network. I can humbly say that I did not expect this before I joined the network." During the interviews, various male and female respondents described how different mullahs had refused to sit in the same room as the female members during the first meetings. One mullah went so far as to say that all the men who had done so should now be hanged. These mullahs now sit with women and accept the contributions and leadership of women in the network. The project's effectiveness is enhanced by the network's election of skilled women in leadership roles. The specific impacts of women are discussed in the sections below in *Impact*.

The network members have shown commitment and dedication during the project. This is evidenced in the overachievement of results in the log frame. RAs spoke with passion about their obligations towards peace. There are many examples of how they have put their own safety at risk in order to travel into conflict areas to have discussions with AOGs.

There has also been an increase in RA skill levels. Respondents said that the training and exposure visits had made a significant difference to their ability to work with AOGs, families, and communities. Commonly cited beneficial training included conflict resolution, countering violent extremism, and action plans. Respondents noted that exposure visits added to the project's effectiveness by adding to their experience of how things are done in other countries. The last exposure visit was to Bosnia and Herzegovina (15-24 Dec 2017).³² Respondents stated that seeing actors from different religions interact peacefully encouraged them to continue working for peace in Afghanistan. A respondent said, "to see a Muslim, a Catholic and a Jewish leader having tea together made me realise that we can

³² The previous exposure trips were: (1) Malaysia (21 Feb – 7 Mar 2014), (2) Turkey (12-23 Oct 2014), (3) Bosnia and Herzegovina (22 Feb – 3 Mar 2016), and (4) Indonesia (10-16 Dec 2016).



solve our religious differences which are much simpler because we are all Muslim.” Also, their attitudes were positively changed by observing and interacting with female religious leaders in other countries. One senior maulavi stated, “within days of me coming back from the exposure trip people started saying that I was different. I was different. The trip had made me a better person. It made me tolerant and gave me hope.” Respondents were united in stating that exposure visits should continue in the future given how much they contributed to changing the attitudes and behaviour of the participants.

The RAs use a method, stemming from the training, that encourages a slow and respectful entry into the world of the AOG. The RAs do not approach the AOG directly; instead, they make contact with relevant family and community members. When they do finally meet with the AOG, it takes several meetings to discuss conflict and peace. This method seems to be working well for the RAs, as the vast documentation and interview examples show. Linked to the method is the vast range of activities in which the RAs are engaged. These activities include direct work with AOGs, negotiations with families and communities, as well as input to university students, school children, and madrasa students. These activities are on top of the normal conflict resolution activities which they do in their communities. Taken together, these activities show how important the wide range and coverage is to the project’s effectiveness.

One of the most important reasons for the RAs’ success is their impartiality. It is vital that communities and AOGs see them as not being affiliated with foreign agendas, institutions and funding. RAs are not being paid to do this work. Finally, another reason for RA success is the specific message that they are using. That is, “this is a political, not a religious war.” Respondents argued that this shift in focus from religion to politics has been effective in getting AOGs to engage with peace rather than conflict. A respondent noted, “many AOGs have never been exposed to this thought and it is a powerful one. It challenges the very reason they are fighting.”

Partnerships

The SDO partnership is discussed under *Efficiency*. The other project partners included government ministries and institutions, involving the High Peace Council (HPC), National Directorate of Security (NDS), Ministry of Religious Affairs and Hajj (MoRA) and Ministry of Women’s Affairs (MoWA). Interviews with these stakeholders showed a solid knowledge and appreciation of SCCP’s work. A common interview theme with these partners was the network’s relevance and effectiveness. For example, the HPC spoke about its strong relationship with SCCP and the fact that SCCP’s engagement is good because RAs have more influence in communities than other peace actors. The NDS stated their strong appreciation of SCPP and their important role in peace, for example, in the recent 3-day ceasefire. The MoRA highlighted the importance of the RAs in peacebuilding in terms of their independence, impartiality and access to communities. The MoWA highlighted the significant impact of women in the SCPP, including their leadership roles. The issue of real engagement and inclusion of women, as opposed to token inclusion, was highlighted as one of SCCP’s major strengths.

Some of the project barriers will now be discussed. A common issue discussed was security. While there were no project fatalities in the last year, two RAs were injured while participating in related peace activities. One RA was shot in the shoulder by the Taliban after attending a peace meeting in a remote area, while the other RA received shrapnel wounds in the legs from a bomb blast after a peace conference in Kabul. These incidents are highly disturbing, and while it is understood that the RAs are putting themselves at risk doing this work, respondents do feel that more can be done to secure their safety by conducting a security review and ongoing training. These incidents also highlight the significant resulting organisational risks for both NCA and SDO.

Another barrier is the varying skill levels across the SCCP. Respondents mentioned how there existed a small group with the network who did not have the necessary skills nor commitment to be conducting or contributing to the peace activities. Others argued that this group was only in the network to go on the exposure trips and attend free training. NCA and SDO have decided not to exclude any members from the network as this could run the risk of unhappy ex-members publicly exposing the other RAs in the network, which could result in harm to them. This is a significant organisational risk for NCA, SDO and RAs, which needs urgent discussion by stakeholders.

The different levels of access to resources were also noted as a barrier. During the interviews, it became evident that those members with private resources (i.e. financial and contacts) were able to conduct many more peace activities in comparison with those members without private resources. The lack of resources was an important theme of this evaluation. It should be noted that the RAs received support funding for NCA to carry out the action plans. During the interviews, the RAs expressed their gratitude for this support. Respondents argued that more resources were required for travel to meetings, food, accommodation and items requested by the AOGs, for example, shoes, clothing, and airtime for their phones. Respondents also noted that funds were required to set up provincial offices with equipment, supplies and meetings rooms. A respondent stated, “we have nowhere to go, nowhere to meet.” They argued that the lack of a physical address contributed to the network being less seriously regarded by other stakeholders.

Some respondents noted that in certain districts or provinces, the NDS and HPC saw SCCP as competition and therefore refused to work with them. The interviews showed that there is a wide range of NDS and HPC responses to SCCP depending on the area under discussion. While SCCP enjoys a strong working relationship with NDS and HPC in some areas, this is not the case in other areas. A respondent noted, “in our area the relationship with the NDS and HPC is problematic. They do not support our work and do not help facilitate the AOGs joining peace. Or they say one thing and do another. Sometimes AOGs are negatively affected.” There were a few examples where the RAs were told that a certain AOG could join the peace process, only to be arrested by the government as soon as he laid down his weapons. Respondents noted that there is no consistency across the NDS and HPC. Depending on the region, there also seems to be a confusion of roles between SCCP, NDS, and HPC. The SCCP is also awaiting the signing of the MoU with the national NDS. As soon as this is done, provincial NDS will be instructed to work together with SCCP. NDS has told SCCP that the MoU will be signed soon.

Some RA respondents also noted two issues where more attention is required. One, RAs were unable to access remote areas because of funding, security, and less contacts. An RA noted, “we need to be doing more in those areas [remote areas] because these communities are largely isolated and unsupported.” Two, RAs noted that more needs to be done to engage youth in peacebuilding, and, more specifically, in SCCP activities.

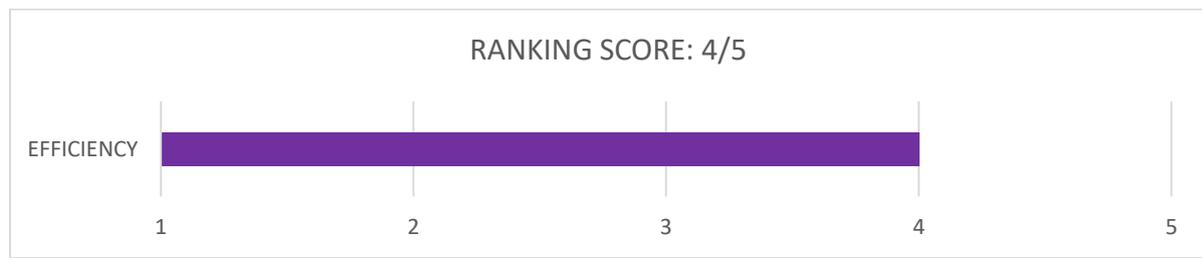
The final barrier discussed by respondents is a resource related issue. While the NCA team provided strong support to team members and SDO, some respondents argued that the project management of the 464 SCCP members was difficult and that a larger managing team, perhaps divided into districts, might strengthen the project’s effectiveness and efficiency in the future.

In looking at NCA’s ability to learn in this project, there is evidence of thorough responses to the 2015 evaluation recommendations. There has been significant progress on the seven recommendations. There is one recommendation that is still pertinent for the current evaluation, namely, *continue process of institutionalising ownership*. This issue is discussed below under *Sustainability*.

This project was aligned with CHS Commitments 4 (Humanitarian response is based on communication, participation and feedback), 5 (Complaints are welcomed and addressed), and 7 (Humanitarian actors continuously learn and improve).

In summary, this project was effective in that it achieved its objectives. This project’s effectiveness was supported by its strong design and implementation. The major factors influencing the achievement of the objectives included the competent NCA project team, the partnership with SDO, NCA’s added value and long-term experience and relationships in Afghanistan, commitment of and methods used by the majority of the SCCP members, inclusion and work of female RAs, influence of the RAs in communities, and linkages to government and other peace initiatives. Some of the barriers included security, varying skill and commitment levels of RAs, relationships with other stakeholders like the NDS and HPC, and the lack of resources.

Efficiency



CRITERIA	SCORE
The relationship between the project costs and results are reasonable	Achieved
The most efficient approaches have been used during the implementation of the activities	Partially Achieved
What is the quality of the NCA-SDO partnership (including NCA’s added value)?	Achieved

ACHIEVED | PARTIALLY ACHIEVED | NOT ACHIEVED

Efficiency is a measure of the relationship between outputs (intervention products or services) and inputs (the resources that it uses). A project is regarded as efficient if it utilizes the least costly resources that are appropriate and available to achieve the desired outputs. Assessing project efficiency requires the comparison of different approaches to achieving the same outputs. This is easier for some kinds of interventions if the activities are standardised. This project had activities that had to be revised, postponed or cancelled due to changes in the political context, security and access.

This evaluation showed that this project was efficient in that the relationship between the programme costs and results were reasonable. As of 19 July 2018, the total project budget of NOK 2,750,000 was divided and spent between NCA and SDO as follows:

NO.	ORGANISATION	PROJECT NO.	NOK	USD	DISBURSED (USD)	REMAINING (USD)	%
1	NCA	110125	1,632,238.00	205,931.79	164,311.31	41,620.48	20.2%
2	SDO	110125-1	937,856.00	114,374.67	99,586.00	14,789.00	12.9%
3	7% NCA HO support cost		179,906	-	-	-	-
Total			2,750,000	320,306.46	263,897.31	56,409.48	17.6%

This table shows that USD 263,897.31 (82.4%) of the funds were disbursed by the end of the project. The remaining amount for NCA was USD 41,620.48 (20.2%) and SDO USD 14,789.00 (12.9%), with a total of USD 56,409.48 (17.6%) remaining when both projects are combined. The main reasons for remaining funds were twofold: (1) international training that did not place due to logistical reasons, and (2) press conferences that did not happen because of security threats. After the first progress report was sent to MFA, NCA Afghanistan informed NCA HO about the unspent fund and requested HO to ask MFA if it is possible to increase the number of trainees. This was communicated to MFA and the response was positive. Towards the end of the project, the finance department advised the project team of the unspent money. This was communicated to HO and, as per the recommendation from HO, MFA was not contacted by HO regarding this matter. NCA HO in Norway advised the project team that the funds should not be spent given how little time remained in the project. The remaining funds will be returned to the donor. This evaluation showed that the most efficient approaches had been used during the implementation of the activities. The only issue identified was the unspent funds.

This evaluation showed that the project staff: acquired appropriate resources with due regard for cost, implemented activities as simply as possible, attempted to keep overheads as low as possible, achieved deliverables on time and budget, and addressed duplication and conflicts. The RA respondents claimed that they were grateful for how the funds had been managed, and that they had learned a lot from how NCA had communicated about and spent the funds. RA respondents commonly stated that even though NCA responded to their requests for funds, the need was bigger than the available funding. They highlighted funds for expenses that include taxi fares, food, refreshments, and responding to AOG requests for articles like clothes and shoes. The payments for the action plans were done in two rounds. The first payment for their transportation and communication costs to facilitate a dialogue was done when they developed their plan. The second payment was done once the RAs had submitted their dialogue reports and the corresponding costs. All respondents argued that while this worked for the project it is not sustainable and eventually the SCCP should be sourcing and managing all funds. A respondent said, “we need to be able to do this ourselves without having to rely on NCA. We still have a lot to learn but this should be one of our major goals for the future.”

Before looking at the partnership between, a few observations about the NCA will be made. This evaluation showed a strong, knowledgeable and committed NCA team. The team size was adequate, but it was noted, as mentioned under *Effectiveness*, that the one person who managed the 464 SCCP members could have been strengthened with more support. This person managed the network very well but the efficiency might have been strengthened had there been more support.

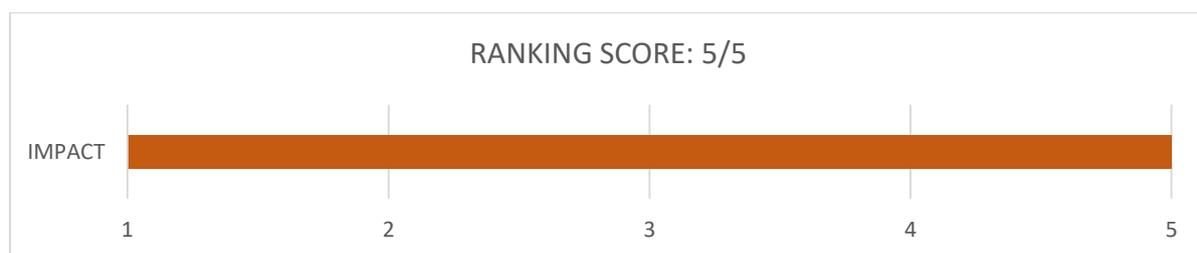
SDO is NCA’s implementing partner for this project. They have worked together since SDO’s inception in 1990, and SDO was the implementing partner for all five phases of this project. The NCA project team expressed its respect for SDO’s vast experience in peacebuilding and more generally in

Afghanistan. NCA’s added value was bringing a skilled, competent, committed and professional project team to provide project support and management. Both organisations felt that the partnership had gone well, based on their long-established relationship, solid coordination, open communication and clear roles and responsibilities. Neither NCA nor SDO highlighted any problem areas. This partnership is a good example of the strengths and effectiveness of INGO and NGO partnerships as outlined in the current Grand Bargain and Localisation agendas. Thus, it can be concluded that the quality of the NCA-SDO partnership was excellent.

This project was aligned with CHS Commitments 2 (Humanitarian response is effective and timely) and 9 (Resources are managed and used responsibly for their intended purpose).

In summary, this evaluation found that the project was implemented efficiently. This evaluation showed that the relationship between the project costs and results were reasonable, and that most efficient approaches were used during the implementation of the activities. The quality of the NCA-SDO partnership was good, and NCA’s added value included the professional and supportive project team. No major issues were identified besides the remaining funds and the need to develop SCCP led and managed processes for future funding.

Impact



CRITERIA	SCORE
There was positive project impact on the participants and wider peacebuilding on the micro (individual), meso (family, community) and macro (institutional, policy) levels	
There was evidence that the project had positive and negative unintended impact on key issues and conflict drivers	
ACHIEVED PARTIALLY ACHIEVED NOT ACHIEVED	

Impact is a measure of the notable intervention effects on the beneficiaries, be they positive or negative, expected or unforeseen. It is a measure of the broader intervention consequences, e.g. social, political, economic effects at the local, regional and national level. It can be difficult measuring the intervention impact in proportion to the overall situation of the target group. This is particularly true in the dynamic and chaotic environments of complex and conflict-driven settings.

Two central challenges in assessing impact are dealing with effects that are numerous and varied (boundary judgment) and the result of complex interactions (attribution). This evaluation used the principals of systems theory (understanding complex adaptive systems) and probability-based inferences (assessing what would have happened if the intervention did not occur) to assess impact.

In exploring whether people received support from the project who otherwise would not have received support, this evaluation showed that the number of AOGs brought to peace in the last year



was 63 formally (integrated into normal life by SCCP members through PPCs) and 40 informally (not introduced to PPC but these AOGs gave up violence and returned to civilian life), for a combined total of 103.

These numbers are only significant if there was observable and sustainable impact over the project period. Impact can be divided into three levels: micro (individual), meso (community), and macro (policy). There is evidence of impact on all three levels. At the micro level, there were various examples of how the project impacted on individuals. As the above numbers and the interviews with the RAs show, the project clearly had an impact on AOGs. Not only were many AOGs able to return to living in communities, some were able to take up new professions. For example, one former AOG is now studying to become a Maulavi and now actively contributing to the peacebuilding process. An RA cited a second example of a former AOG who is now running for government elections in Kunar province. A third example was provided of a former AOG who is now doing public awareness around elections.

There were also many examples of how the project had impacted on individual RAs. For example, one RA spoke about how little he knew about conflict resolution, and how the training had completely changed his views and approach to conflict and peace. He stated, "I now have a method and it works. This has given me confidence and success in my work with AOGs." A female RA spoke about how, after she returned to her village following the SCCP training, the community initially shunned her attempts to be involved in conflict resolution initiatives. By following the training methods, her attempts were slowly accepted by the community and within this last year she has achieved greater community acceptance. She is presently involved in a wide range of conflict resolution activities in her community, including direct AOG engagement. A common response during the interviews was how the SCCP project had resulted in attitudinal and behavioural changes in the RAs. The RAs cited examples of congregation, family and community feedback regarding these individual changes. An RA said, "this network has changed me completely, forever, and for the better."

At the meso level, respondents noted that the project had resulted in positive impacts on families and communities. Respondents provided examples of the SCCP's work that had resulted in reduced family and community conflict. For example, family members have thanked RAs for solving various conflicts related to issues including land disputes, family conflict, marriages, tribal differences, and domestic violence. A respondent noted, "because of the network, I am now much more involved and successful in solving conflicts in my community." AOG engagement and the laying down of their weapons has also resulted in positive effects on families and communities. Respondents spoke about the healing that occurred through the return and integration of AOGs into families and communities. Some of the other meso level impacts are noted below in the discussion of unintended impacts.

At the macro level, impact was evident at the policy and institutional levels. The numerous examples of macro impact in the 5th phase were accumulative in that there were clear links to previous RA initiatives and activities from the previous phases. One example will be provided stemming from the exposure trip to Indonesia, with the remaining examples from the last few months. When the RAs arrived in Indonesia, they made a concerted effort to deliver a message of peace to the people whom they met there. The SCCP delegation, represented by Abdul Hakim Mujahed (HPC member), extended a verbal invitation to Vice President of Indonesia, Mr. Jusuf Kala, to visit Afghanistan. Also, the head of SCCP, Mr. Noori, invited the head of the Indonesian parliament to visit Afghanistan. President Ghani, the HPC chief HPC members visited Indonesia separately. This resulted in the tripartite Ulema conference of Afghan, Pakistani and Indonesian Ulema.

This resulted in the Indonesian government inviting the Afghan government and SCCP members to further discussions. President Ghani invited the Indonesian government to Afghanistan. This example



illustrates significant institutional linkages to which the SCCP contributed. The examples from the last few months illustrate the high level of SCCP engagement. For example, the SCCP has been invited to the presidential peace discussions, thus highlighting the President's recognition and engagement of the SCCP. The SCCP was also involved in the recent negotiations that led to the Fatwa for the 3-day ceasefire during the last Eid (June 2018).³³ Finally, the SCCP is currently part of the HPC peace and reconciliation discussions in Mazar.

The project resulted in unexpected positive and negative impacts. Some of the unintended positive impacts included the engagement of SCCP members in other activities like pursuing parliamentary nominations (5 members: 2 males and 3 females), acting as advisers to governors (2 members) and being nominated as the head of a provincial council (1 member, female). As noted previously in *Effectiveness*, there was a significantly higher number of action plans and activities for peace processes produced than expected, which resulted the SCCP being recognised by the government at the district, provincial and national level. Respondents noted that there had been a decrease in the insistence of *mahram* during training and exposure trips. Women have assumed increased responsibilities and leadership roles in the network, for example, the network deputy (who is also a Shia) and another woman who is the SCCP regional director in the north. Some women have also established contact with AOGs and successfully brought them into peace.

At the community level, respondents provided anecdotal evidence that AOG engagement has led to the reopening of schools, clinics, roads, and bridges. For example, one respondent noted that his engagement with AOGs led to the reopening of a school, which gave 1,400 children access to education again. Another respondent noted in his district all schools for girls had been closed. His discussions with AOGs led to the reopening of 3 schools, which gave 870 girls access to education. Finally, respondents also provided examples of their coverage, where they use every opportunity to encourage peacebuilding. In one mosque, the maulavi has 10,000 attendees every week for Friday prayers. One RA and professor working at a university sees 200 male and female students every day. A female RA, working as a teacher, sees 320 students every day. Another RA gives radio broadcasts every 3-4 weeks, with an estimated audience of 200,000-300,000. These huge and significant figures show the project's current and future reach and influence.

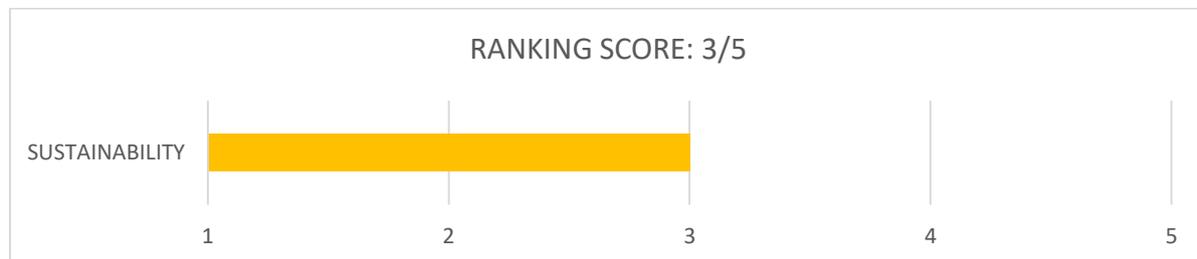
Some of the unintended negative impacts included what respondents described as the misuse of the SCCP by a small number of members. They argued that some members were using the SCCP to go on exposure trips and attend training without getting involved in any peacebuilding activities or making any significant contributions to the SCCP's work. Respondents also noted that some AOGs joined peace with local government guarantees only to be arrested by the central government after they had joined peace. Respondents argued that these cases, though few, challenged the credibility of the RA's work. Linked to this is the fact that some AOGs found it very difficult after joining peace because they had no fixed livelihood and income. There was also the perceived competition that the SCCP posed to the HPC and NDS. Respondents argued that in some areas this resulted in less collaboration and peace activities not being supported and, at times, sabotaged.

In summary, this evaluation showed that the project had an impact on the micro, meso and macro levels. Importantly, this project's impact is not only seen in the number of AOGs being brought to peace but in their related impact on national peace initiatives and areas like community access to education, health, bridges and roads. This project's impact is also noted in the exceeded targets and

³³ See, for example: Tolo News, CEO Welcomes Taliban's Three-Day Ceasefire Move, 11 June 2018, <https://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/ceo-welcomes-taliban%E2%80%99s-three-day-ceasefire-move>; BBC, Afghan Taliban agree three-day ceasefire - their first, 9 June 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-44423032>

the associated impact on beneficiaries. There is evidence that the project had positive and negative unintended impacts on AOGs, RAs, gender, and communities.

Sustainability



CRITERIA	SCORE
There is evidence that the results of the programme can be sustained beyond donor support (organisational strengths, ownership, governance, etc. – internal factors)	
The project has established inter- and intra-group linkages with formal and informal peace institutions that are likely to support the continued implementation of the programme to ensure building sustainable peace (external factors)	

ACHIEVED |
 PARTIALLY ACHIEVED |
 NOT ACHIEVED

Sustainability is a measure of intervention benefits after external support has been completed. Many interventions fail once the implementation phase is over, mainly because the beneficiaries do not have the financial resources or motivation to continue the programme activities. Sustainability is increasingly becoming a core theme in evaluations as international and national stakeholders emphasize autonomy, self-reliance and long-term improvements.

While this project reached and surpassed its anticipated results, this evaluation found gaps with regards to sustainability. In assessing whether the results of the project can be sustained beyond donor support, respondents argued that while there had been many successes and gains during the last year, the SCCP is currently not able to continue the project without significant external support. A respondent noted, “we might be able to continue some of the activities, but we will not be able to consolidate and develop the important gains that we have made.” Another respondent said, “we have gained many skills but not enough to take this forward ourselves. We still need more skills around funding, organisational development and management.” Respondents stated that they required both technical and financial support moving forward. Areas of perceived capacity building needs include areas like identifying potential donors, proposal writing, fund management, M&E, and leadership development.

This evaluation found that there was room for improvement in the way that NCA engages the participation of beneficiaries in project design, implementation, monitoring and reporting. In other words, the majority of RAs interviewed stated that they could have been engaged and capacitated in ways that would have resulted in a stronger organisational position for the SCCP at the end of the project’s 5th phase. As stakeholder respondent stated, “the network is not independent enough. Members have been spoon-fed and the result is too much dependence on NCA.” This comment should not detract from the project’s many successes, but it is a reminder of the gap that SCCP members, project staff and partners feel exists at this point in the process. Having a participatory methodology strengthens planning, engagement, participation, ownership, investment, and sustainability.



Stakeholders argued that NCA's methodology to engage beneficiaries could be clearer and stronger from the beginning of the project.

In assessing the extent to which the project has established inter- and intra-group linkages with formal and informal peace institutions that are likely to support the continued implementation of the project to ensure building sustainable peace, this evaluation found that there had been important advancements. These include the SCCP registration with the MoJ and strengthened linkages with government ministries (e.g. NDS, MoWA and Hajj) and the HPC. Respondents argued that there are inconsistencies across provinces with regards to these linkages and that the SCCP should work towards having consistent linkages with these partners across the country. A solid platform of linkages has been formed from which to move forward with the work of the SCCP.

Out of the four accepted transitions at the end of a project – terminate, extend, expand and redesign – respondents argued in favour of the last three. Some stated that the project could be extended for a few more years in its current form; some stated that an expansion of the goals and the number of RAs is required; and others contended that the project should be redesigned in order to consider what is required moving forward. This evaluation found that project redesign would probably make the greatest contribution to sustainability. More specifically, a strategic review is required to assess and plan for the next steps of the project. Project staff stated that they had been considering a similar path and they agreed that this was the time to engage in strategic planning in order to strengthen the project's sustainability.

In discussing how long NCA should continue supporting SCCP, various views were presented. The range was 3-15 years, with a common view of 3-5 years additional minimum support. The length of time that the support continues is something for NCA and its partners to discuss as part of the above strategic planning.

This project was aligned with CHS Commitment 3 (Humanitarian response strengthens local capacities and avoids negative effects).

In summary, this evaluation showed that despite the significant project gains made in the last year it would be difficult for the project, at this point, to be sustained beyond donor support. The project has established strong linkages with formal links with peace partners that are likely to support the continued implementation of the project. The time is right to pause and strategically reassess the key learnings as decisions are made about the future of the project.

CONCLUSION

NCA has worked in Afghanistan since 1979 and it has developed strong relationships with national civil society organisations, government agencies, and national and local institutions. NCA's country focus is on economic empowerment, WASH and peacebuilding. NCA has been involved in various peacebuilding programmes in Afghanistan with the goal of increasing levels of peace for communities. The project under evaluation focussed on the use of RAs in the peacebuilding process, including the engagement of AOGs to lay down their weapons and join the peace process.

This evaluation highlighted a unique and vital project that is relevant to the needs of beneficiaries and peacebuilding initiatives in Afghanistan. The project is especially relevant given the noticeable exclusion of RAs from peace processes over the last fifteen years. The project responded to international, national, regional and local needs and priorities. The project's uniqueness and significance were highlighted in terms of the direct use of RAs to raise peace awareness and bring AOGs to peace. It is important to note that this project was implemented under extremely difficult circumstances, with serious threats to participants' safety. For this reason, much of the project's relevance and successes had to be kept a secret to protect the RAs, AOGs and related communities. NCA, SDO and RAs responded well to these challenges.

The project was implemented effectively and efficiently, which is noteworthy given the particular challenges noted above. The overall quality of the project implementation was good. This evaluation showed positive project results, which fulfilled and mostly exceeded the objectives and achievements of the proposed outcomes and outputs. Notably, the main successes were evident in two areas. First, there was strengthened RA engagement in localised peace processes with AOGs. The RAs did an excellent job initiating AOG member dialogue meetings and peace dialogues between AOGs and the Afghan Government. Second, SCCP established formal linkages with formal and informal peace institutions, as evidenced by the number of MoUs signed with peace institutions.

The area where most work still needs to be done is in ensuring that SCCP becomes an independent functioning organisation that can continue delivering strategic peace initiatives. While there have been positive developments in the areas of establishing central and regional offices, the leadership panel, and policies and procedures, this evaluation found that, at this point in time, SCCP is not in a position to continue operating without external technical and financial support. Some of the main challenges are: security, varying levels of skill and contributions of RAs, and varying differences in regional relationships with the HPC and NDS. This evaluation showed that SCCP does not yet have the necessary organisational structure and skills to operate independently and respond to issues like the identification of donors, proposal writing, grant management, and M&E.

It is strongly recommended that NCA and SDO continue to support and develop this important project. Another 3-5 years' support would reinforce the noteworthy gains up to this point and ensure that SCCP operates independently, effectively, and efficiently in the future. A participatory model is required to engage SCCP members in the strategic redesign of the project. The time is right to pause and strategically reflect and plan. The project team has already started this process.

This project continues to have enormous importance and potential. Based on the project's achievements and the vital role that RAs, both men and women, will continue to play in the current context of peace building, NCA is uniquely and strongly placed not only to contribute to the success of SCCP but ultimately to peace in Afghanistan.

LESSONS LEARNED

These lessons learned highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the project preparation, design, and implementation that affected performance, outcome, and impact. This evaluation showed that:

- This project is unique and significant with regards to peacebuilding in Afghanistan.
- RAs are key contributors to the peacebuilding process because of their community presence, respect from communities, access and problem-solving roles.
- Peace efforts are stronger when men and women work together.
- Exposure trips led to significant attitudinal and behavioural changes in SCCP members.
- A strong M&E system allows for the tracking of activities even in challenging contexts.
- The strong, knowledgeable and committed NCA team contributed to the project's effectiveness and efficiency.
- Having national staff who are familiar with the context and are well connected makes project management easier.
- Working with a well-established partner assists with project implementation, management and success.
- This project resulted in many unintended positive impacts like the improvement of community access to education, health, bridges and roads.
- Despite the impressive gains achieved over the project phases, there is still work to be done to ensure that the SCCP can operate as an independent and self-sufficient body.
- NCA is uniquely placed to make a significant contribution to the ongoing peacebuilding initiatives in Afghanistan.

RECOMMENDATIONS

NO.	AREA	RECOMMENDATION
1	Support	Continue with technical and financial support towards the development of the SCCP for the next 3-5 years
2	Strategic Planning	Conduct a strategic planning session in the next month or two with all relevant stakeholders to discuss the project's future goals and to create an independent and functioning organisation
3	Participatory Methodology	Strengthen the participatory methodology to engage beneficiaries as this project moves forward
4	Physical Presence	Establish more regional and provincial offices in order to create a stronger physical presence
5	Training	Develop a training plan to capacitate key SCCP members with the required organisational skills (e.g. management, proposal writing, and M&E)
6	Train the Trainer Model	Develop a train the trainer model so that SCCP minimises its reliance on external partners for capacity building
7	Funding	Employ or second a part-time proposal writer to write proposals and train 2-3 SCCP members
8	Statute	Use the completed SCCP Statute to show donors to illustrate SCCP's work
9	Remote Areas	Develop an implementation plan that targets remote areas that RAs have not been able to engage up to this point.
10	Gender	Continue strengthening women's SCCP membership and leadership roles
11	Youth	Develop a plan to engage and utilise youth in the network
12	Exposure Trips	Continue exposure trips to countries that have experience in peacebuilding, with clear selection criteria and participant commitments to the SCCP after the trip
13	Targets	Set targets based on actual results from Phase 5
14	Security	Conduct a security review and update the security plan to ensure the highest level of security for RAs involved in the project

Annex 1: Terms of Reference (ToR)

Evaluation of Strengthening the Religious Actors Network for Peace 2017 - 2018

Norwegian Church Aid

Closing date: 25 Apr 2018

Norwegian Church Aid ('NCA') works together with people and organisations across the world in 32 countries to eradicate poverty and injustice. We provide emergency assistance in disasters and work for long-term development in local communities. NCA is also member of the ACT Alliance, one of the world's largest humanitarian alliances. The Alliance consists of organisations in over 130 countries across religious faiths. Norwegian Church Aid - Together for a just world!

NCA has been working with the Afghan people for nearly four decades, engaged in long-term development, humanitarian support and advocacy work. This long presence has allowed NCA has built solid relationships with national civil society organisations, government agencies, and institutions at the national and local level. Focus on economic empowerment, WASH and peace building.

The hired consultant is to propose a robust methodology for the subject evaluation. NCA has a strong preference for both qualitative and quantitative methods and identify unintended effects and outcomes outside the results framework. Participatory review methods are encouraged to be applied. The methodology should clearly elucidate plans for a desk review for documents, travel plans, and briefing and debriefing sessions.

The evaluation is planned to be undertaken in May and June 2018 in Afghanistan, with a total of 22 working days for the entire evaluation. Initially an expression of interest with budget and short CV should be sent by 25 April 2018. The selected evaluator will be expected to submit a technical proposal describing the review methodology proposal and questionnaires by 02 May 2018.

While all OECD/DAC[1] five criteria for the evaluation is pertinent, the evaluation focuses on effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability:

- ***Relevance**:** Is the broadened scope of Phase 5 of the programme relevant for the context and needs of the National Ulema Council for Peace? Are the stated goal and objectives relevant to issues of Strengthening the Religious Actors Network for Peace and aligned with the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF, 2017-2021).
- **Effectiveness:** What part of the programme has been the most effective and had a positive role through the established NUCP network? What has been the contribution of programme across other sectors?
- **Efficiency:** Is the relationship between the programme costs and results reasonable? Have the most efficient approaches been used during the implementation of the activities?
- **Impact:** What is the impact of the programme on the participants and wider peacebuilding? Is there evidence that the programme is having an impact (Positive/negative, intended or unintended) on key issues and conflict drivers?

· *Sustainability*: Is there evidence that the results of the programme can be sustained? To what extent has the programme established institutionalise ownership and consolidate inter and intra-group linkages with formal and informal peace institutions that are likely to support the continued implementation of the programme to ensure building sustainable peace.

Qualifications: (max. 5-6 bullet points)

- At least 5 years' experience in carrying out evaluations
- The evaluator shall have familiarity with Afghanistan context.
- Experience in participatory methods that includes right holders
- Understanding of Rights-Based Approach
- Extensive knowledge in peace building, conflict sensitivity and gender mainstreaming
- Knowledge and working experience of religious leaders (Ulema) in Afghanistan
- Evaluator has experience in carrying out evaluations, reviews or assessments in Afghanistan
- the consultant need to have a good strategic and set up to secure information from both male and female stakeholders

[1] <http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

Applicants will be shortlisted based upon their expression of interest, budget and CV. The marking system is as follows:

- Quality of proposal (30 points)
- Experience in carrying out quality review of a similar nature (10 points)
- Familiarity with Afghanistan context. (10 points)
- Experience with participatory evaluation tools (15 points)
- Expertise and knowledge of religious leader (20 points), Do No Harm (5 points) and gender mainstreaming (5 points) Proven facilitation skills (5 points)

HOW TO APPLY:

To apply for this tender request, an expression of interest should be sent by email to mirwais.stankzai@nca.no with Cc to abd@nca.no by 16:00 (GMT +4:30) on 25 April 2018.

Annex 2: Evaluation Questions

RELEVANCE

1. Is the broadened scope of Phase 5 of the programme relevant to the context and needs of the SCCP?
2. Are the stated goals and objectives relevant to issues of Strengthening the Religious Actors Network for Peace and aligned with the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF, 2017-2021)?

EFFECTIVENESS

1. What part of the programme has been the most effective and had a positive role through the established SCCP network?
2. What has been the contribution of the programme across other sectors?

EFFICIENCY

1. Is the relationship between the programme costs and results reasonable?
2. Have the most efficient approaches been used during the implementation of the activities?
3. What is the quality of the NCA-SDO partnership (including NCA's added value)?

IMPACT

1. What is the impact of the programme on the participants and wider peacebuilding on the micro (individual), meso (family, community) and macro (institutional, policy) levels?
2. Is there evidence that the programme is having unintended impact on key issues and conflict drivers?

SUSTAINABILITY

1. Is there evidence that the results of the programme can be sustained beyond donor support? (organisational strengths, ownership, governance, etc. – internal factors)
2. To what extent has the programme established inter- and intra-group linkages with formal and informal peace institutions that are likely to support the continued implementation of the programme to ensure building sustainable peace? (external factors)

Annex 3: Work Plan

CONSULTANT	Literature Review & Preparation	3 days	Week 1
	Flight: Cape Town – Dubai	(1 day)	Week 2
CONSULTANT	Collect Afghan Visa at Consulate in Dubai	(1 day)	Week 2
	Flight: Dubai – Kabul	(0.5 days)	Week 2
CONSULTANT	Briefings (0.5) Data Collection (8 days) Debriefing (0.5)	9 days	Weeks 2 & 3
	Flight: Kabul – Cape Town	-	Week 3
CONSULTANT	Data Analysis & Draft Report	5 days	Week 4
NCA	NCA Review of Draft Report	(5 days)	Week 5
CONSULTANT	Final Report	1 days	Week 6
TOTAL = 18 days			



Annex 4: Documents Reviewed and Consulted

- GoIRoA, Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF), 2017-2021, <http://policymof.gov.af/afghanistan-national-peace-and-development-framework-anpdf/>
- GoIRoA, Citizens' Charter National Priority Programme, December 2016, <http://policymof.gov.af/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Citizens%E2%80%99-Charter-Program.pdf>
- GoIRoA, The Constitution of Afghanistan, 26 January 2004, <http://www.afghanembassy.com.pl/afg/images/pliki/TheConstitution.pdf>
- NCA, Accountability, <https://www.kirkensnodhjelp.no/en/about-nca/accountability/>
- NCA, Afghanistan, <https://www.kirkensnodhjelp.no/en/where-we-work/afghanistan/>
- NCA, Building Peace in Communities in Afghanistan, 2015
- NCA, Conflict Resolution Database, January 2018
- NCA, Evaluation, Religious Actors for Peace in Afghanistan, 3rd Project Phase 2015-2016, April/ May 2016
- NCA, Final Report, Reflective Sessions Conducted with Religious Actors on 19-20, 25-26 March 2018
- NCA, MFA, Logical Framework Analysis
- NCA, MFA, Quantitative Results, 2017-2018
- NCA, Monitoring Report, Jalalabad, 5-7 April 2018
- NCA, Norwegian Church Aid's Accountability Framework, <https://www.kirkensnodhjelp.no/contentassets/603b767f08b8484084f00467f07a507f/nca-accountability-framework1.pdf>
- NCA, Our History, <https://www.kirkensnodhjelp.no/en/about-nca/our-history/>
- NCA, Proposal for Strengthening the Religious Actors Network for Peace, To the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the period 15 May 2017 to 14 May 2018, 25 April 2017
- NCA, Proposed Costs, Proposal for Strengthening the Religious Actors Network for Peace, To the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, For the period 15 May 2017 to 14 May 2018, 25 April 2017
- NCA, Progress Report, Progress Report on Social Council for Consolidation of Peace (SCCP) Afghanistan, 5 February 2018
- NCA, Project Completion Report, Strengthening the Religious Actors for Peace Network-Phase V, 2018
- NCA, Report on Exposure Visit for Religious Actors for Peace (RAP) to Bosnia Herzegovina, 16-24 December 2018, 20 January 2018
- NCA, Short report on Field Visit, Nangarhar Province, 2-3 February 2018, 4 February 2018
- NCA, Together for a just world: Norwegian Church Aid's Statement of Principles, 30 May 2008, https://www.kirkensnodhjelp.no/globalassets/strategiske-dokumenter-og-foringer/kn_prinsipdok_en_2011.pdf
- NCA, Training Report, Three-day Training for Religious Actors on Promoting Culture of Peace and Nonviolence, Kabul, 30 December 2017 – 1 January 2018
- NCA, Training Report, Three-day Training for Religious Actors on the Manual for Countering Violent Extremism in Afghanistan, 23-25 January 2018, Countering Religious Violence, Kabul, 11-12 October 2017
- Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and NCA, Grant Agreement regarding AFG-17/0003, Strengthening the Religious Actors Network for Peace, 3 January 2016
- SCCP, Manual on Countering Violent Extremism in Afghanistan, 2018
- SDO, Strengthening Religious Actors for Peace Program Activities Plan Follow Up, Short Report,



15 January 2018

- SDO and NCA, RAP Project Monitoring Report from Kabul Province, 12 February 2018
- SDO and NCA, RAP Project Monitoring Report from Kandahar Province, 30 January 2018
- SDO and NCA, RAP Project Monitoring Report from Nangarhar Province, 12 February 2018
- The Kabul Times, Time is ripe for peace making in Afghanistan, President Ghani tells NATO summit, 14 July 2018, http://www.thekabultimes.gov.af/2018/07/14/time-is-ripe-for-peace-making-in-afghanistan-president-ghani-tells-nato-summit/?utm_source=SocialAutoPoster&utm_medium=Social&utm_campaign=Facebook
- UN, Security Council, 31 October 2000, Resolution 1325, [http://undocs.org/S/RES/1325\(2000\)](http://undocs.org/S/RES/1325(2000))
- UN, Security Council, 31 October 2000, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 1325 (2000), Calls for Broad Participation of Women in Peace-building, post-conflict Reconstruction, <http://www.un.org/press/en/2000/20001031.sc6942.doc.html>
- UN, Sustainable Development Goals, SDG 16, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg16>
- UNEG, Norms and Standards for Evaluation, June 2016, <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914>
- Project photos
- Project videos
- <https://www.kirkensnodhjelp.no/en/>
- <https://www.kirkensnodhjelp.no/en/where-we-work/afghanistan/>

Annex 5: Stakeholders Interviewed

NO.	PERSON INTERVIEWED	POSITION	VENUE	DATE	METHOD
1	Connie Maria Shealy	Country Director, NCA	Kabul	11 July 2018	Interview
2	Ahmad Hassan Abdul Hadi Marufi Sayed Tamim Hayauddin Tamkin	Program Manager, NCA Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Coordinator, NCA Peacebuilding Program Coordinator, NCA Peacebuilding Program Officer, NCA	Kabul	12 July	FGD
3	Ahmad Hassan	Program Manager, NCA	Kabul	12 July	Interview
4	Abdul Hadi Marufi	Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Coordinator, NCA	Kabul	12 July	Interview
5	Sayed Tamim	Peacebuilding Program Coordinator, NCA	Kabul	12 July	Interview
6	Hayauddin Tamkin	Peacebuilding Program Officer, NCA	Kabul	12 July	Interview
7	21 Interviews	SCCP Leaders and Members (various provinces)	Kabul & Mazar	12-19 July	Interviews
8	Abdul Aziz	Advisor to the Minister, Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs	Kabul	15 July	Interview
9	Gen. Fazlullah Safi	Director, Directorate of Peace Programs Support, NDS	Kabul	16 July	Interview
10	Shala Hadid	Director, MoWA, Balkh	Mazar	17 July	Interview
11	Sher Zaman Sabirzada	Chief of Secretariat, PPC in Balkh	Mazar	18 July	Interview
12	Habibullah Farhang	Strengthening the Religious Actors Network for Peace project Focal Point, SDO	Kabul	19 July	Interview
13	Nimatullah Hameed	NCA & Partner Financial Coordinator	Kabul	19 July	Interview
14	Abdul Hadi Marufi	Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Coordinator, NCA	Kabul	19 July	Follow-up Interview
15	Ahmad Khalid Hatam	Consultant to NCA	Kabul	21 July	Interview

SUMMARY	
INTERVIEWS	FGDs
Total Interviews 30	Total FGDs 1
Total Persons Interviewed 34	Total Persons in FGDs 4
TOTAL RESPONDENTS 38 (34 + 4)	

Annex 6: Logical Framework

OVERALL GOAL: <i>Religious actors facilitate, support and engage in inclusive peacebuilding actions with Armed Opposition Groups and other conflicting parties, contributing to a sustainable reduction in violent conflict</i>				
	INDICATORS	BASELINE	TARGET	SOURCES OF VERIFICATION
OUTCOME 1				Self-Reported Data of the Religious Actors
Strengthened engagement of religious actors in localised peace processes with armed opposition groups	1a. No of Religious Leader and Armed Opposition Group member dialogue meetings	1a. 33	1a. 39	Supervision reports and interviews
	1b. No of Peace Dialogues initiated between AOGs and Afghan Government	1b. 6	1b. 7	Reports from relevant PPCs
OUTPUT 1				
1.1: Increased technical skills of selected religious actors to engage in peace processes with armed opposition groups.	1.1: No of religious actors trained in dialogue facilitation methods, negotiations, trust building, and drafting of peace agreements, who demonstrate increase in knowledge and skills	1.1 To be established	1.1 increased in participants' knowledge of 50% or more	1.1.1: Lists of participants 1.1.2: Pre-test and post-test results
1.2: Religious actors (dialogue experts) increase linkages with key stakeholders	1.2: No of religious actors' meetings organised with formal stakeholders	1.2 12	1.25 meetings organized with formal stakeholders in 10 provinces each	1.2: Meeting minutes, pictures
1.3: Religious actors increase face-to-face meetings members of armed opposition groups	1.3.1: No of action plans for peace processes developed 1.3.2: No of dialogue meetings organised with AOGs	1.3.1 33 1.3.2 33	1.3.1 39 1.3.2 39	1.3.1: Action Plans 1.3.2: Religious Actors self-reported data



Sample of Activities:

- 1.1. Provide technical training to 50 (20% women) selected religious actors on Peace Processes, Dialogue Facilitation Methods, Negotiations, Drafting of Peace agreements, and trust building to enable the religious actors to directly engage in dialogue with armed opposition groups. The training will be for five days in Kabul.
- 1.2. Religious Actors hold meetings with Office of the National Security Council, Ministry of Haj, HPC, and Provincial Peace Councils, every three months
- 1.3.1. Assist 30 religious actors to conduct conflict analysis and develop action plans for initiating peace dialogues, over three days in Kabul
- 1.3.2. Hold dialogue meetings with armed opposition groups
- 1.3.3. Assess outcomes of dialogue meetings with armed opposition groups in a reflective meeting, for two days, twice in Kabul

OUTCOME 2				
The NUCP is able to establish formal linkages with formal and informal peace institutions	2. No of MoUs signed with formal and informal peace institutions	0	40	MoU
OUTPUT 2				
2.1: Regular interaction in place between NUCP members and formal provincial and national level structures (HPC, PPCs, Ulema Council)	2.1: No of meetings per quarter between NUCP, Ulema Council members, HPC and PPCs members.	2.1.: 0	2.1 40	2.1: Minutes and participants lists
2.2: NUCP members serve as resources to peace at provincial and district levels through written MoUs (HPC, PPC, District level peace shura)	2.2.1: No of local level institutions acknowledge the positive supporting role of NUCP members. 2.2.2 No of MoUs signed with provincial and district level peace institutions	N/A	2.2.1 50 2.2.2 40	2.2.1: Individual interviews and focus group discussions 2.2.2 Signed copies of ToRs
<p>Sample of Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1.1 Conduct mapping of formal and informal peace institutions on local and national level 2.1.2 Organize regular meeting with mapped institutions 2.1.3 Preparing draft MoUs to be used by the NUCP members 				



OUTCOME 3	3. % of NUCP members satisfied with how NUCP internal structures (i.e. leadership panel, policies and procedures) are working, disaggregated by gender, age and religious sect	84.5%	85%	Interviews and questionnaires with regional committee and leadership panel members
NUCP is a functioning organisation to deliver strategic peace initiatives				
OUTPUT 3	3.1 NUCP receives its registration certificate from the Ministry of Economy (MoE) 3.2 No of regional committee members with adequate knowledge of supervision and monitoring	3.1: N/A 3.2: To be established	3.2 75%	3.1 Registration Certificate 3.2 Pre- and post-test results
3.1 NUCP is formally registered as an NGO with the Ministry of Economy				
3.2 Increase the capacity of regional committee members in supervision and monitoring				
<p>Sample of Activities:</p> <p>3.1.1. Assist in developing NUCP statutes and start registration process with Ministry of Economy</p> <p>3.1.2. Assist establishing of NUCP secretariat and establish and furnish 3 offices for NUCP</p> <p>3.2.1. Provide support for the religious actors/ regional committees to document the results of their action plan implementation</p>				